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Honey in Cakes and Candies

A radio interview between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Wallace Kadderly, Office of Information, broadcast Tuesday, December 12, 1939, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of 104 associate radio stations.

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WALLACE KADDERLY:

Here we are in Washington. And here's our friend, Ruth Van Deman, with a look in her eye that tells me she has some very timely news from the Bureau of Home Economics.

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

It's time I did, Wallace. Do you realize there are just 12 more cooking days left before Christmas?

KADDERLY:

That sounds to me like all the time in the world.....twelve days to bake cakes, make pies, stir up puddings, boil up candies, pop popcorn.....

VAN DEMAN:

You aren't forgetting the family has to be fed, the house cleaned, and a few dozen other chores sandwiched in?

KADDERLY:

Probably I am. But what's so important as good Christmas cakes, and cookies some of the old-fashioned kinds.....

VAN DEMAN:

....made with honey and spice. Wallace, you're taking the words right out of my mouth.

KADDERLY:

I didn't mean to crowd you.

VAN DEMAN:

You're not, in the least. I was planning to spend this time today on cakes and candies made with honey. There always seems to be a certain amount of romance about honey.

KADDERLY:

"Honey of delicious memories"....which major or minor poet was it said that?

VAN DEMAN:

Sorry. My food memory is working better than my poetry memory right now..... If you take down the old-time cookbooks, I think you'll find many of the Christmas cake and cookie recipes calling for honey.

KADDERLY:

It was the only sweetner available in many cases.--

(over)

VAN DEMAN:

And there's a real point in using honey in Christmas cakes, or any cookies or cakes you want to bake up ahead and keep on hand for a while. Honey takes up moisture from the air, and that keeps the cake from drying out. It stays fresh longer.

KADDERLY:

That's because the sugar in honey is in the form of levulose---if I remember my chemistry right.

VAN DEMAN:

Righto--levulose, or fruit sugar. That gives honey this hygroscopic....this moisture-absorbing property.

KADDERLY:

And, as I remember, in your honey leaflet you allowed for all that....and worked out some very delicious recipes for honey cakes, and cookies, and candies... at least as a potential consumer I found those recipes very delicious reading.

VAN DEMAN:

When you say your honey leaflet of course you mean.....

KADDERLY:

The Bureau of Home Economics.

VAN DEMAN:

And Elizabeth Whiteman, and Mrs. Yeatman, who stirred, and baked, and bubbled and boiled, the honey and spices and good things together,----down in our laboratories. They kept at it until they got these recipes as nearly foolproof as possible.

Honey is a rather tricky thing to cook with, when you're making cake or candy....something in which the texture needs to be just so. The bees don't absolutely standardize their product. Some honey contains more water than others. On the average though honey is about one-fifth water.

KADDERLY:

And some honey is dark colored, some light. That depends on the flowers the bees visit when they gather the nectar.

VAN DEMAN:

And the flavor goes all the way from something as delicate as the perfume of white clover blossoms to the very strong scent of a buckwheat field.

But this much can be said about using any kind of honey in cakes and cookies. Don't try to use it, cup for cup, in place of sugar in a recipe that calls for sugar. You'll have to reduce the liquid to allow for the water in the honey. Otherwise your cake will be heavy and too moist. It's much better to use a recipe that calls for honey in the first place.

By the way, in mixing the batter for a cake, or for nut bread using honey, combine the honey with the milk, and eggs, and other liquid ingredients. That way you get the honey perfectly blended with the dry ingredients.

And here's another important point. Use a moderate oven in baking any kind of a mixture made with honey. Honey caramelizes and scorches very easily.

Also what gives honey its delightful aromatic flavor are the same essential oils that give flowers their perfume. When you heat honey, you drive some of this aroma off into the air. And naturally the greater the heat and the longer the honey stays heated, the more of the aroma you lose.

Well, Wallace, you see when I really get started on the subject of honey I can't stop.

KADDERLY:

Quite all right---just so long as you get around to saying something about the honey candies.

VAN DEMAN:

Oh, the great American sweet tooth..... Well, honey is very useful in making certain kinds of candy. Being chiefly levulose, as we just said, honey doesn't crystallize so easily as ordinary sugar.

KADDERLY:

You mean sugar made from the sugarcane, or the beet.

VAN DEMAN:

Highly refined white sugar, yes. But honey is excellent to use with sugar in making a soft candy like nougat, or caramels, or turkish paste....candy that has a soft, velvety texture.

KADDERLY:

And your honey leaflet.....

VAN DEMAN:

Mrs. Whiteman's, Mrs. Yeatman's honey leaflet.

KADDERLY:

Check. Or shall we say the Bureau of Home Economics' honey leaflet?

VAN DEMAN:

Check.

KADDERLY:

Anyway "Honey and Some of Its Uses"....to use the full title of this leaflet issued by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, has all three of these recipes you've just mentioned for honey candies.

VAN DEMAN:

Check.

KADDERLY:

Well, what do you think the chances are for any of our Farm and Home friends who might be interested, getting a copy of this honey leaflet before Christmas.



VAN DEMAN:

We'll do our very best. But you know what happens to mail just before Christmas.

KADDERLY:

I suspect not all the honey will be eaten up by Christmas. I suspect people will still be wanting to make honey cakes and candies after Christmas.

So, Ruth, if you're willing.....

VAN DEMAN:

More than.....

KADDERLY:

Then I'm going to say - Farm and Home friends, for any of you who want laboratory-tested recipes for using honey in baking and candy making, just drop a card to the Bureau of Home Economics here in Washington, D. C. All you need to ask for is honey leaflet.....just those two words honey leaflet. And before Christmas, if possible, or as soon after as possible, the Bureau of Home Economics will send you this free leaflet with 8 pages of recipes and information about the food value of honey.

And, Ruth Van Deman, we'll hope to see you up here with us again next Tuesday.

VAN DEMAN:

Wallace, may I add just a word about a very different subject?

KADDERLY:

Certainly, Ruth.

VAN DEMAN:

This time of year we get a great many letters asking us about canning meat.

KADDERLY: (Aside)

Butchering time of course.

VAN DEMAN:

I'd just like to say that the home canning bulletin is on tap for anybody who wants it. It has a whole section on how to can meat at home.... beef, pork, lamb, veal, even domestic rabbit.

KADDERLY:

And the number of that bulletin.....

VAN DEMAN:

Never mind the number. We have only one home canning bulletin.

KADDERLY:

Very well. That's two timely bulletins available from the Bureau of Home Economics.....the honey leaflet, and the home canning bulletin with complete directions on how to can all kinds of meat in the home kitchen.

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